



**BEST IN CLASS EARLY EXPERIENCES  
PROGRAM**

NORTH  
**Dakota** | Human Services  
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Hello

Introduction of myself and our team, Shonda Wild, Administrator (out of Bismarck) and Tasha Lind, coach (out of Grandforks)

**This meeting  
is being  
recorded and  
may be  
viewed by the  
public online.**

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Please note this session is being recorded, and it will be available for the public to view on the department's website.

# BEST IN CLASS PROGRAM

QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES FOR CHILDREN IN THE YEAR BEFORE THEY ENTER KINDERGARTEN

## INTRODUCTION

- Competitive award established by the 2021 67th Legislative Assembly
- ND Legislative Session 2023, authorized Best in Class funding through June 2025
- Represents a targeted state investment in North Dakota programs whose actions can demonstrate the return on investment that is possible with intentional, research-supported investments in early childhood
- Programs are monitored, evaluated, and supported to help ensure the program investment has an impact

The Best in Class Grant program is built on over 20 years of research from similar programs across the country, especially the First Class Pre-K program in Alabama (we had the opportunity to visit their state last December and again in October for their Early Childhood Conference).

Alabama's program has been awarded the highest-quality rating by the National Institute for Early Education Research for 15 consecutive years. After seeing the impact of Alabama's First Class program firsthand, and seeing that they had extensive data showing results, ND legislators were intrigued.

## Reps. Weisz, Rohr and Westlind and Sens. Dever and Lee

sponsored the bill that established the Best in Class in the 2021 Legislature.

Best in Class offers resources for participating 4-year-old programs, including access to a higher level of support for staff through coaching, play-based curriculum, family engagement, connections to child health and development screening, measurement of child outcomes, and evaluation and enhancements of the space for quality early childhood experiences.

# 2023-2024 BEST IN CLASS PROGRAMS

## 2023-2024

45 programs

65 classrooms

## 2022-2023

32 programs

44 classrooms

## 2021-2022

23 programs

29 classrooms



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## Programs Expectations-Per Century Code

North Dakota Administrative Code Chapter Section 50-11.1-22-24

<b>Licensed Child Care</b>	<b>Head Start Grantee</b>	<b>Local Education Agency Public /Private</b>
Meets the standards and expectations of no less than step 3 in the ND quality improvement system or has met the standards of a nationally recognized early childhood accrediting entity	Head Start Grantees in compliance with Federal Head Start Monitoring Protocol	Local education agency has obtained Four-Year-Old Program approval through HHS and certification from the department of public instruction for pre-k grade configuration

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<b>Teaching Staff Qualifications</b>	<b>Licensed Child Care</b>	<b>Head Start</b>	<b>Local Education Agency Public/Private</b>
<b>Lead Teacher</b>	Bright & Early of ND Step 3 or 4 lead teacher qualifications	Head Start teacher qualifications	ND Education Standards & Practices Board - Approved Credentials to teach Four-Year-Olds
<b>Auxiliary Teacher</b> (para, aide, assistant)	Bright & Early of ND Step 3 or 4 auxiliary teacher qualifications	Must meet Head Start auxiliary teacher qualifications.	Must meet Paraprofessional requirements held by the school.

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## **PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS**

- All children enrolled must be four years old before August 1st, 2024
- Admit children of all learning abilities into their program
- Operate for at least 400 hours over a period of at least 32 consecutive weeks. Programs operating at least 800 hours over 32 consecutive weeks are desired
- Incorporate at least 10 hours of family engagement

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## **Baseline:**

Small Group of 8-10 children - \$60,000

Large Group of 11-20 children - \$120,000 (2 staff)

**Tier 1 Calculation** is based on the hours of operating your four-year-old program.

Part-time program 400 – 799 hours (<25 hrs/wk) = 50% of Baseline

Full-time program 800+ hours (25+ hrs/wk) = 100% of Baseline

Second Year and on-going participants have an additional tier which may reduce awards by half...

Tuition dependence and/or school district's free and reduced priced student enrollment

## **Cash or in-kind match equal to 15% of total award**

## **Distribution of Funds**

- Based on Deliverables and a percentage of funds is distributed four times between September and June

## Second year 4 levers

- School district economic status (50% or greater)
- Fulltime or Parttime (minimum of 400hr or 800hr or more)
- Group size
- Tuition dependent



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## **Program Components:**

- Tuition:
  - If charging tuition must use Best in Class sliding fee scale or charge less
  
- 50 % set aside spots for enrollment
  - The Child Information Form collects the information needed for the program to prioritize children who meet the 50% set aside slot criteria
  - Children whose household income is 60% SMI or less
  - Children with an identified delay or disability
- Randomized Selection when it applies
  - If a program has more applicants in the set-aside pool than it has set-aside slots available, students will be selected through a randomized selection process within the set-aside pool.

## Second year 4 levers

- School district economic status (50% or greater)
- Fulltime or Parttime (minimum of 400hr or 800hr or more)
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## Program Components:

- Coaches support teaching staff throughout their participation in Best in Class
  - BIC Environment Standards
  - Community of Practice- held monthly
  - Curriculum
  - Gold Assessment
- Teaching Strategies
  - Required to use GOLD assessment tool - ND state's license
    - Interrater Reliability
  - Creative Curriculum Preschool Guided Edition (Print and digital bundle)
  - Professional Development Required
  - Ready Rosie / Family engagement

## Coaching-

BIC environment standards- aligns with Creative Curriculum to offer space and materials that promote hands-on learning experiences to for investigations and play), Environment Needs Assessment (interest centers), priority of funds (for first year), partnership with companies to create catalogs for BIC

C2F app- informal observations, reflective dialogue, and creating action plans

COP- different topics to support teachers

## Teaching Strategies-

Gold- Required to complete IRR, documentation (gather data in the moment- picture, video, ITE), complete checkpoints, Reports (positive feedback from families)

Creative Curriculum- programs are required to align their curriculum with the ELS not required to use CC (encouraged, wholistic) This curriculum offers individualized instruction by understanding how children's abilities progress and supporting them with unique color-coded progressions that show the typical development of skills from birth through third grade. Effectively scaffold learning experiences to respond to each child's current strengths and needs, [including those with disabilities](#), with embedded guidance and strategies located on curricular resources.

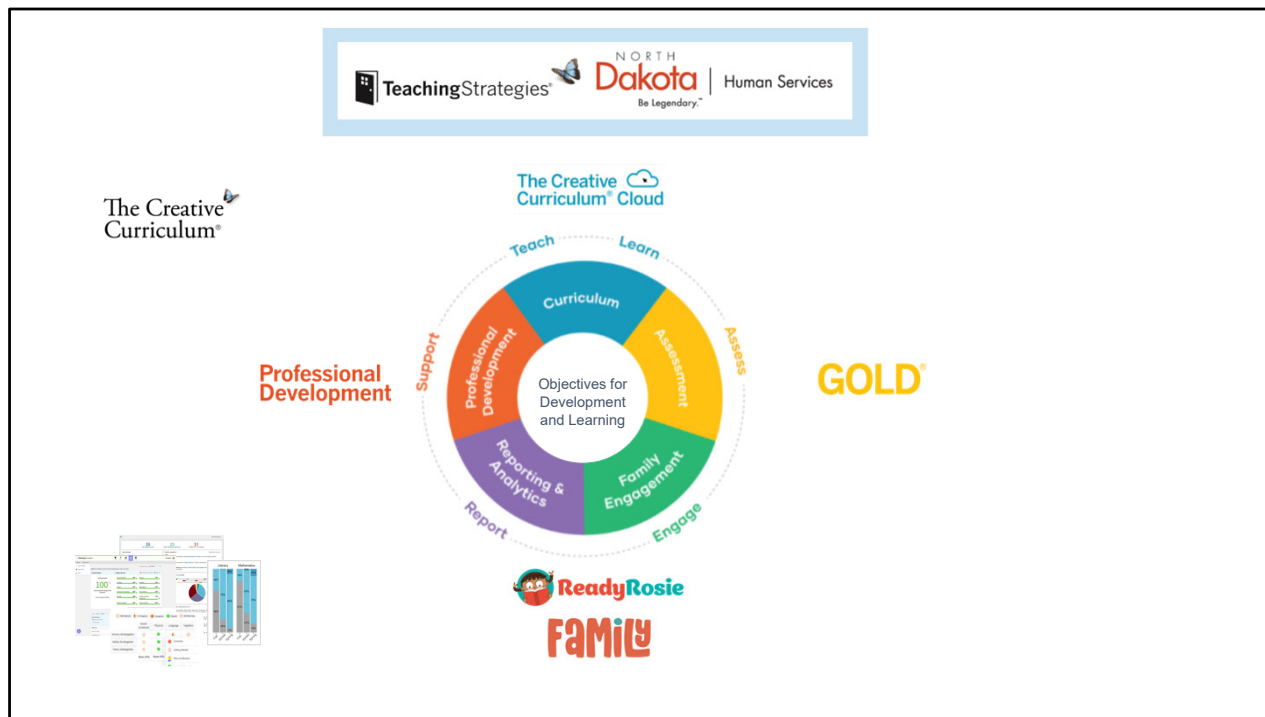
Als Pals- Social Emotional Curriculum (Supplement) to returning teachers

#### Professional Development

- All programs have access to the Hub and all online training in TS and Quorum
- Provide 3 (6 hour) virtual trainings through TS to programs
  - Introduction to Creative Curriculum
  - Focus on Assessment (new programs)
  - Physical Environment
- Power of Observation Book Study- 10 hour (Returning Teachers)

#### Ready Rosie

- Expectation that all programs invite families to receive weekly playlists



The state provided a license for each participating classroom with Creative Curriculum Cloud.

This gives them digital access to

CC: lesson plans that embrace all domains of learning and are enhanced with mighty minutes and intentional learning cards

Gold: Focuses on a continuum of learning and assess children

Ready Rosie: Provides beautiful videos for parents to watch and then do an activity with their child in their home setting.

Reports: Child Growth

PD: Rich resources on-line with 24/7 access

Intentional design for ongoing teacher feedback so we can learn from and with them along the way.

<https://teachingstrategies.com/platform/>

<https://teachingstrategies.com/product/distance-learning/>

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## **Program Components:**

- Monitor will be assigned to each awarded program
- Health Specialists
  - Health and Safety Standards
- Family Engagement
  - Ready Rosie
- Screenings & Referrals
  - Health screenings
    - (physical, dental, vision & hearing, developmental)

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## Timeline:

- Feb. 23 - Applications DUE by 5 p.m. CT. to [dhsec@nd.gov](mailto:dhsec@nd.gov)
  - March 13 - Application reviews and interviews
  - March 15 - Application award notifications
  - May 1 - Awardees information session
  - July 1 - New awardee contract begins
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- <https://www.hhs.nd.gov/cfs/early-childhood-services/best-in-class>

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Questions?



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